

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-11

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DRAFTED BY NEA/AFN:TSWILKINSON:PAW
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY TUNIS NIACT IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 115670

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (NOUIRA, HEDI) TS

SUBJECT: JOINT COMMISSION AND NOUIRA VISIT: AMBASSADOR
HEDDA'S CONVERSATION WITH UNDER SECRETARY NEWSOM, MAY 5

1. NOTING THAT THERE HAD BEEN A CERTAIN SLOWING DOWN OF
THE NOUIRA VISIT TO THE U.S., HEDDA SAID HE HAD HEARD THAT
UNDER SECRETARY NEWSOM MIGHT BE ABLE TO MAKE A TRIP TO
THE AREA AND WONDERED IF A MEETING OF U.S.-TUNISIAN
JOINT COMMISSION COULD BE ORGANIZED AROUND A STOP BY
NEWSOM IN TUNIS. MR. NEWSOM SAID HE WOULD CONSIDER THE
QUESTION BUT THAT HIS FUTURE SCHEDULE WAS NOT YET FIXED
AND HE COULD MAKE NO COMMITMENT. WITH

REGARD TO NOUIRA VISIT, NEWSOM SAID THAT PRESIDENT WOULD
PROBABLY REVIEW AND BEGIN TO PIN DOWN HIS CALENDAR FOR
REMAINDER OF 1978 IN JUNE OR EARLY JULY.

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2. HUMAN RIGHTS: IN INTRODUCTORY REMARKS, HEDDA SAID
GOT HAD ALWAYS ACTED TO FOSTER UNIONISM IN TUNISIA
INCLUDING ALLOWING DEDUCTIONS OF UNION DUES FROM WORKERS
PAY "AT THE SOURCE". GOVERNMENT IN JANUARY HAD ONLY
REACTED TO PROVOCATION OF UGTT, WHICH HAD BECOME THE

REFUGE FOR THE DISSIDENT LEFT, AND HAD CONNECTIONS WITH

CERTAIN FOREIGN COUNTRIES. NEWSOM NOTED THAT WE DID NOT WISH TO INTERFERE IN TUNISIA'S DOMESTIC AFFAIRS, BUT CONTINUING DETENTION OF ACHOUR AND OTHERS WAS A SOURCE OF CONCERN. HEDDA RECALLED PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT THAT THOSE ARRESTED AT TIME OF JANUARY INCIDENTS WOULD BE DEALT WITH PUBLICLY AND IN THE COURTS, AND DEFENDED TUNISIA'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD ON GROUNDS OF FREEDOM OF ALL TUNISIANS, INCLUDING OPPOSITION, TO HAVE PASSPORTS AND TRAVEL EVEN FOR POLITICAL REASONS (E.G., MESTIRI).

3. DISCUSSION ALSO COVERED SAHARA, STATE OF TUNISIAN ECONOMY, AND ARRIVAL NEXT WEEK OF TUNISIAN BUYERS' MISSION.

4. YOU MAY DRAW ON ABOVE AS BACKGROUND FOR MEETING WITH NOUIRA ON MAY 6. CHRISTOPHER

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